

Virtual School Symposium 2010  
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# Online Professional Development for High School Faculty

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA **QJ** REACH



# **Online Professional Development for High School Faculty: *Teaching Teachers to Design/Redesign, Develop and Deliver Quality Online Courses***

This presentation provides a general summary of the experiences of the University of Oklahoma High School (OUHS) in our efforts to implement online professional development for our 100% part-time, geographically-dispersed online faculty.

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# Online Professional Development for High School Faculty



Brief History of OU High School

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# **Brief History of the University of Oklahoma High School**



# A Brief History



The University of Oklahoma High School (OUHS) is an accredited program of the OU Center for Independent and Distance Learning (CIDL). CIDL provides educational options for adolescents and adults through a variety of means, including interactive asynchronous online courses, webcast courses, telecourses, and print-based correspondence courses.

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# A Brief History - continued



CIDL has been offering distance learning courses since 1910 and is ranked as one of the largest programs in the country. In 2000, CIDL established the OU High School diploma program. OUHS is a virtual high school, with nearly 90% of its curriculum delivered online. All OUHS courses comply with the approved curriculum of Oklahoma schools.



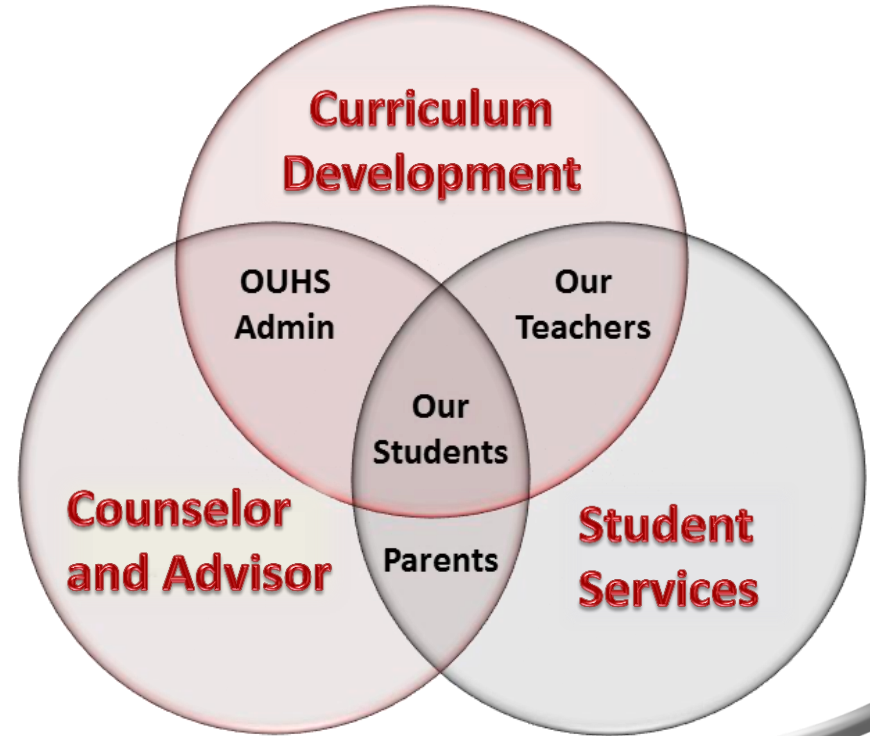
# A Brief History - continued



OUHS grants high school diplomas completely through distance learning, and is accredited by the **Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA)** and by the **North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI)**, an accreditation division of AdvancEd.

# Our Organizational Structure

The OUHS Program operates through the concerted efforts of CIDL staff, OUHS faculty, our students, and their parents. Our organizational structure provides a network of support for both our faculty and our students.



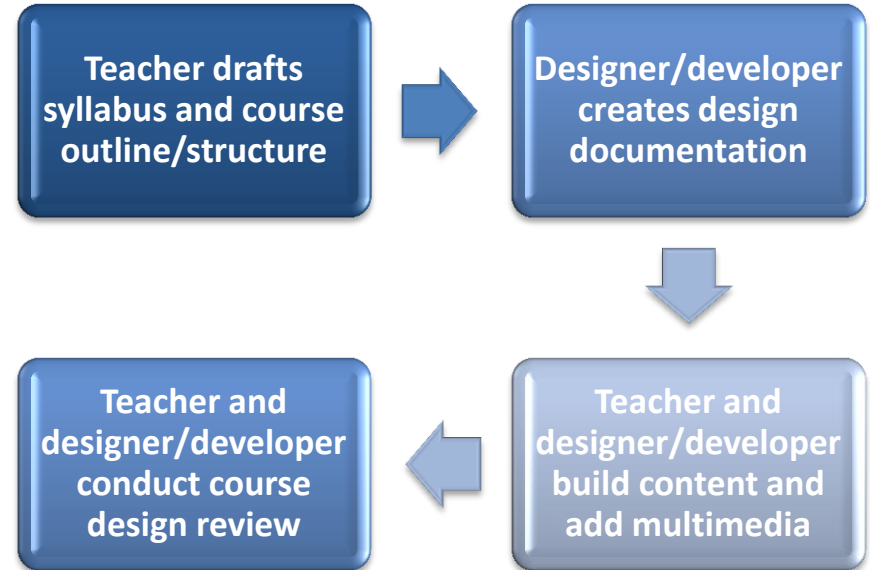
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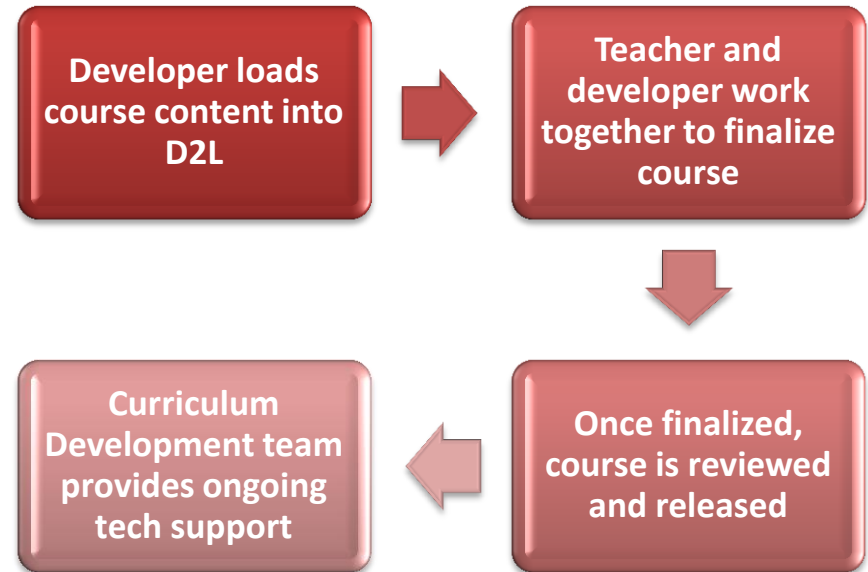
# Course Development Process - continued

OUHS faculty work closely with the Curriculum Development team to create courses. Our teachers collaborate with instructional designers and/or course developers through each phase of the design and development of courses.



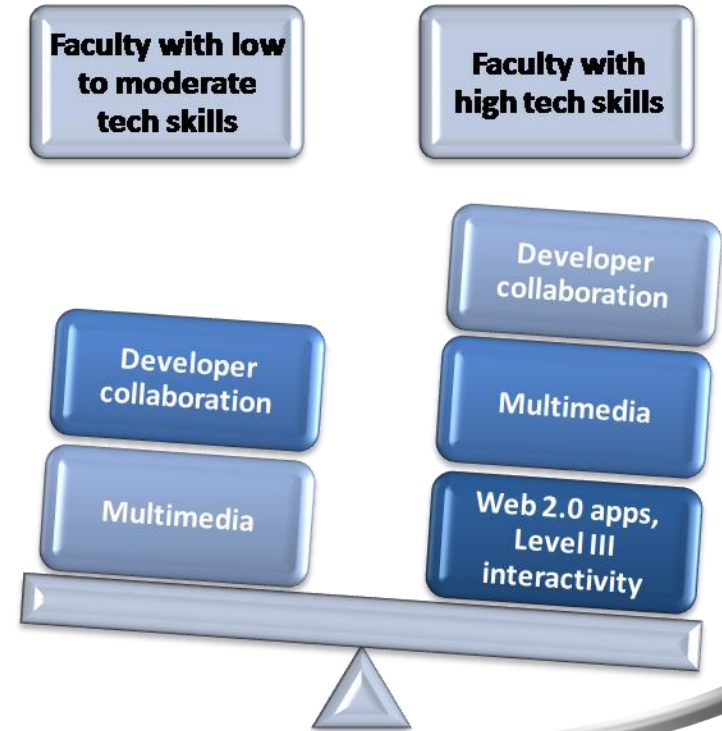
# Course Development Process - continued

Course content is then loaded into our course management system (Desire2Learn) by the individual designer or developer assigned to work with the teacher. The Curriculum team provides technical support to faculty, students, test proctors, and the CIDL Student Services team.



# Course Development Process - continued

In the past, the level of interactivity in a course was dictated by the technological skill of the teacher teaching it. As our courses became more interactive and aligned with standards for online education, we focused on providing supportive, practical professional development for our online teachers.



# Past Professional Development Efforts

Our past efforts to provide professional development for the OUHS faculty were confounded by a number of factors.

- **100% part-time faculty** – most OUHS faculty were full-time teachers in ‘brick-and-mortar’ schools;
- **Geographically dispersed** – many of our faculty are not local, representing areas across the state of Oklahoma;
- **Past training history** – much of the faculty training provided in the past was individualized, ‘one-on-one,’ and ‘by request.’

# Past PD Efforts - *continued*

- **Continuum of technology skills** – our faculty's technology skills vary, as do their familiarity with Web 2.0 tools and how to effectively incorporate them into their instruction;
- **Weak Collegiality and Collaboration** – in the past, we made little effort to encourage our faculty to communicate with one another, to collaborate, or to work together to establish a professional learning community.

# Past Professional Development Efforts



Availability and scheduling proved to be the greatest obstacles to being able to convene our faculty at a single time in the same physical location. We found that planning *traditional PD workshops* (face-to-face) for our distance learning teachers was not the most appropriate approach.



# Our Need for Online PD

After several years of trying to follow traditional models of teacher professional development, we learned what did not work for us. We decided to look at best practices for online education and other research to provide guidance to our efforts.

After reviewing a large body of literature about quality standards for online learning, online teaching, online course design, and online professional development, we decided to abandon our past efforts and start over.

# **The Goals of OUHS Online PD**

We set three goals for our OUHS Professional Development:

- 1. To familiarize OUHS faculty with established standards and best practices for online teaching and learning, and how to apply those standards and best practices in their teaching;**
- 2. To provide basic technical training for OUHS faculty on the operation and functionality of our course management system, Desire2Learn; and**
- 3. To encourage OUHS faculty to explore Web 2.0 technologies and ways to incorporate them into their teaching.**

# **Standards & Guidelines for Online Teaching and Professional Development**

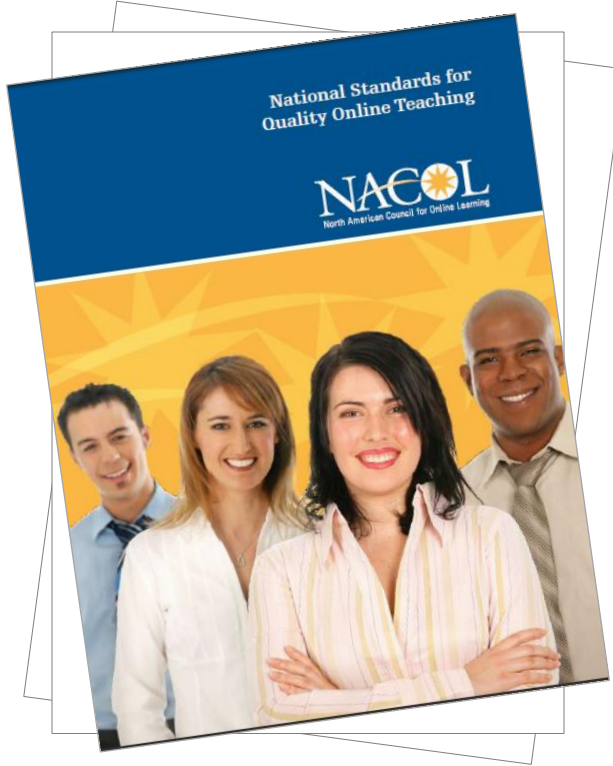


# Standards for Quality Online Teaching

For established standards for online teaching, we looked at the original eleven *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* set by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

We also looked at the thirteen revised/amended standards set by the North American Council for Online Learning/International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), which are based on the works of SREB and other organizations.

# iNACOL National Standards



As we examined the national standards, we selected those that mapped onto our organizational structure, operating model, and student population (i.e., iNACOL Standards **A-F** and **H-K**).

From there, we looked at the indicators for those standards, and ways to develop PD that emphasizes the necessary skills.

# iNACOL National Standards - continued

Our existing operating model addresses iNACOL Standards **A**, **D**, **H**, **I**, and **M**. We used the following iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching (and their associated indicators):

- The teacher has the prerequisite technology skills to teach online (B);
- The teacher plans, designs and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, interaction, participation and collaboration in the online environment (C);



# iNACOL National Standards - continued

- The teacher models, guides and encourages legal, ethical, safe and healthy behavior related to technology use (E);
- The teacher has experienced online learning from the perspective of a student (F);
- The teacher demonstrates competencies in using data and findings from assessments and other data sources to modify instructional methods and content and to guide student learning (J);

# iNACOL National Standards - continued

- The teacher demonstrates frequent and effective strategies that enable both teacher and students to complete self- and pre-assessments (K); and
- The teacher collaborates with colleagues (L).

# SREB Guidelines



For assistance in refining our teacher professional development, we looked at SREB's *Guidelines for Professional Development of Online Teachers*.

We began planning our professional development in accordance with the guidelines and our understanding of the needs of the OUHS faculty.

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# **SREB Guidelines - continued**

We used each of the primary guidelines to organize and focus our teacher professional development. Those guidelines are:

- **I:** Academic Preparation
- **II:** Content Knowledge, Skills and Temperament for Instructional Technology;
- **III:** Online Teaching and Learning Methodology, Management, Knowledge, Skills and Delivery.

# Integrating the Standards/Guidelines

Though attempting to address multiple standards and address all three primary guidelines was a very broad approach, it served as the initial foundation for our online professional development.

We identified fairly early that some of the indicators of the standards we selected were already addressed within our program, but we wanted more consistency in the way we trained and supported our high school faculty.

# **Design & Development of the OUHS Online PD**





# Our Approach

Since we are an online independent study program that offers self-paced learning for students in an online environment, we aimed to use that structure as the basis for delivering the online PD. We planned to:

1. *Deliver the professional development to our online faculty in an online environment with which they are already familiar;*
2. *Give our online teachers an opportunity to experience learning as an online student – in a self-paced manner, similar to how our students experience their courses.*

# Our Approach - continued

Our online PD was also designed to as demonstration and resource forum for various Web 2.0 tools. We encouraged faculty to navigate the 'course,' and to investigate any of the tools available.

We also created discussion forums so they could offer their opinions and reflections on different topics related to online teaching and learning, technology, web-based resources, etc.

# The 4 Modules of the OUHS Online PD

1

Principles & Practices of Online Teaching

- Transitioning to Online Teaching
- Common Myths about Online Education
- Best Practices in Online Teaching and Learning

2

Understanding Course Management Systems

- Basic Intro to Desire2Learn
- Best Practices for D2L Course Delivery

3

CIDL/OUHS Course Development Process

- Our Process
- Creating Quality Online Courses
- CIDL Online Course Design Rubric

4

Teaching Online for CIDL

- OUHS in the Digital Age
- Professional Development
- Online Professional Learning Community

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# OUHS Online PD - *continued*

Each module was designed as self-paced instruction, and included a flash-based presentation, selected readings, activities requiring the use of either the quiz, dropbox, and/or discussion functions of D2L, and a feedback forum.

The four modules were supplemented by a web resources page that included videos on online teaching, online learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills; discussion boards for reflection; a Web 2.0 glossary; and a technical support-oriented Help/FAQ page.

# **Preliminary Results of the OUHS Online PD ‘Course’**



# Preliminary Results

**The preliminary results of our first online PD are mixed.**

After a slow start, we found that our faculty have specific interests in online teaching and learning – interests that were reflected in how they approached the modules, how they progressed through them, and the responses they shared with us.



# Preliminary Results - continued

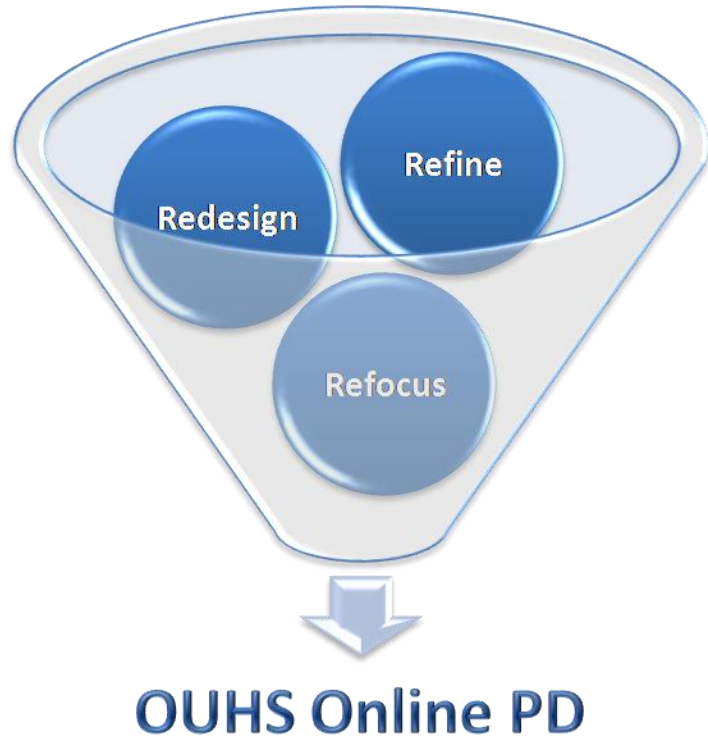
We have found that our faculty indicate a general interest in learning more about online teaching and learning. However, general information lacks the specificity necessary to be easy to apply to their own teaching. Much like some traditional PD, the broad approach appears to be *too broad in scope*.

For example, our English teachers are interested in online tools for writing, grammar, and vocabulary, while our science teachers' interest are in online models and problem-based videos.

# **Current Status: Redesigning, Refining & Refocusing**



# Redesigning, Refining, and Refocusing



We have decided to redesign, refine and refocus our online PD. We have found that specificity is the key to meeting the needs of our online faculty – whose interests, skills, needs, and approaches are diverse. Collaboration is also a very important dimension of online teaching and learning.

# Our New Plan

We've learned that – at least initially – online PD will work well for us. We also know that PD is most effective when it is targeted to the specific needs and interests of the teachers for whom it is created. Our newest plan for the online PD is directed toward:

- **Regularly surveying our faculty to determine what their self-identified needs and interests are, and designing PD accordingly;**
- **Facilitating the creation of a professional learning community among OUHS faculty.**

# Our New Plan - continued

Though we are simultaneously involved in trying to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape of online education, we are even more devoted to providing quality online educational options. To do this, we understand the vital importance of keeping our faculty “in the loop” ...

Though the shift toward online teaching and learning may be ‘new,’ what isn’t new is answering the question of what kind of professional development will be most effective in helping our teachers. ***Our journey continues ...***

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**Any Questions?**



# **Please Contact:**

If you have any questions regarding this presentation,  
please feel free to call or email:

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